

Inhalant Abuse Prevention:

Key Messages for Adults

1. More than 1,000 everyday products, including cleaning, office, and art supplies, solvents, gases, and shop chemicals have the potential to be abused as inhalants.
2. Inhalants are actually poisons, pollutants, toxins, and fire hazards.¹ They are made of crude oil and not meant to be inhaled.²
3. These products are safe when used as directed, but when vapors are concentrated and breathed in, they can become dangerous and deadly.
4. There is no safe level of inhalant use. 40% of all people who die from inhaling showed no signs of previous use.³ Therefore, no use should be tolerated and any use should be followed up by a professional alcohol and drug assessment and education about the dangers of inhalant abuse.
5. Inhalants can be addictive, both psychologically and physically. There are more inhalant users (age 12-17) than cocaine, heroin, and hallucinogen users combined.⁴
6. Inhalants can cause permanent damage to the nervous system, lungs, liver, kidneys, and brain.
7. More than one out of every ten Maine students between grades six and twelve has tried inhaling gases or solvent vapors to get high. Abuse may start as early as third grade and peaks in grades eight and nine.
8. Because of all these reasons, inhalant abuse should be on your RADAR. Be alert for the signs of inhalant abuse: Suspicious use of products, chemical odors, rash around the mouth and nose, weight loss, paraphernalia (plastic bags, empty containers, and smelly rags).

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¹ E.g., gasoline, butane, propane; any product dispensed in an aerosol can such as air freshener, computer air duster, WD40; solvent-based products such as nail polish and remover, white-out, glues, markers, paints

² Mark Groves, "Andy, the Anteater Curriculum"

³ Source: John Ramsey, St. Georges Hospital, United Kingdom data, 2008 <http://www.vsareport.org/>

⁴ Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2003 www.oas.samhsa.gov

Maine Inhalant Abuse Prevention Work Group

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For more information about inhalants please contact

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